

AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MONTGOMERY
COUNTY, VIRGINIA HELD ON THE 29TH DAY OF MARCH, 2010 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE
BOARD CHAMBERS, MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER, 755
ROANOKE STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA:

PRESENT:	Annette S. Perkins	-Chair
	James D. Politis	-Vice Chair
	Doug Marrs	-Supervisors
	William H. Brown	
	Gary D. Creed	
	Mary W. Biggs	
	John A. Muffo	
	F. Craig Meadows	-County Administrator
	L. Carol Edmonds	-Assistant County Administrator
	Martin M. McMahon	-County Attorney
	Karen Edmonds	-Human Resources Director
	Angie Hill	-Financial & Managements Services Director
	Marc Magruder	-Budget Manager
	Judy W. Kiser	-Assistant to the County Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Advertised Real Estate Tax Rate - 75¢ per \$100 of Assessed Value

To receive citizens' comments on the County's advertised real estate tax of 75¢ per \$100 assessed value.

The Chair called the public hearing to order and explained that the advertised tax rate of 75¢ represents a 4¢ increase on the real estate tax rate. The Board of Supervisors voted to consider a maximum rate of 75¢ for advertising purposes only. The Board of Supervisors may approve a rate at or below this amount. In order to approve a higher rate, the Board would be required to re-advertise and hold another public hearing.

The Chair explained that she would call the names of those who had signed up to speak and each speaker would be allowed five (5) minutes. After all those who signed up had addressed the Board, those in the audience who had not signed up would be given the opportunity to speak on the advertised tax rate:

Mary Ann Hinshelwood said she was brought to Christiansburg as an infant, and grew up and raised her own family in Christiansburg and practiced law until four years ago when she retired from her law practice. She purchased a duplex on West Main Street, the first real estate she has ever purchased. She spoke in support of the 75¢ real estate tax rate, she believes it is needed to continue the quality services that are currently provided in Montgomery County.

Mary North, 6020 Piney Woods Road, Riner, spoke in support of the 75¢ real estate tax rate. As a member of the Friends of the Library, she has seen a 10% increase in visitors to the library, and if their funds are decreased the library would have to cut its hours. She enjoys bringing her granddaughter to children's story time so she is particularly interested in that. Ms. North also voiced her support for the schools.

Steve Estrada, 30 Mountainside Drive, Christiansburg. As a volunteer at the Meadowbrook Library, he has seen firsthand not only how many people use the library, but also come out to support the library. He believes a few programs alone that are offered to the children would be

enough reason to increase the funding for the library. It has become the best resource for eastern Montgomery County to grow. Mr. Estrada is a proponent for the 75¢ real estate tax rate because he doesn't see how the library could function with any less funding.

Erin Bull, 2703 Chelsea Court, Blacksburg - President of the Montgomery County Education Association, thanked the Board for their support of public education, and asked that their support be continued by level funding the school budget. Due to state cuts, the schools are reducing supplies and equipment by 50% and eliminating 45 teaching positions. Level funding at the county level would save 11 of those positions. She pointed out that the data that is used to predict future prison population is based on the percentage of 3rd graders who cannot read at grade level. She asked that the Board approve the 4¢ real estate tax increase in order to maintain our education system, our library system, and public safety.

Holt Hottel 275 Citrine Court, Christiansburg, spoke against the proposed tax increase. Mr. Hottel said he recognized the fact that the County needs additional funds, and he suggested the Board look at the intermodal facility as an area that would bring jobs and revenue into the County, and that the \$50,000 set aside for the County to legally oppose the intermodal facility be used to offset some of the other needs that need to be addressed.

Tom Roberts 312 Landsdown Street, Blacksburg, spoke in favor of the 4¢ tax increase and proceeded to put it in perspective. For a \$100,000 property value, the increase represents \$40 per year, or 11¢ a day; for a \$200,000 home it represents \$80 a year or 22¢ a day. In that perspective, when you consider that 62% of those funds will go mainly toward schools, Mr. Roberts believes it is very important that Montgomery County have sufficient funds rather than try to cut funding from schools, or other major needs.

Joe Painter Spoke in support of the proposed tax rate. Mr. Painter said he is a fiscal conservative and if he thought for one moment that this increase meant bigger government he would be the first person to voice his objections. Speaking mainly toward the Sheriff's office, he believes the deputies need our support, and he is in favor of the 4¢ tax increase.

Saroj Ghoting 5710 Piney Woods Road, Riner, spoke in support of the tax increase, particularly to maintain the library services. The public library supports lifelong learning, from children to seniors, and especially in hard economic times those services are used more, not less. The libraries offer classes on using computers and on developing resumes. Families who have lost jobs or have had cuts in their pay use the library as a resource for on-line applications, to learn how to grow their own food, to learn new skills and to bring their children for story time and other programs.

Lois Crismond 200 Sunrise Street, Christiansburg, spoke in opposition to the budget. People have been losing their jobs, and although she hates to see the libraries, schools or anyone else losing their job, she believes we cannot afford it. She mentioned that the Treasurer was here tonight, along with several of his employees and she heard that his employees were being compensated for attending the hearing, not necessarily with money, but with time. She suggested one way the county could raise money was to sponsor events such as concerts, etc. and she offered to volunteer her time to help the County raise money. There is a need to bring more money into the county, but don't put the burden on the taxpayers. She said there are already people who cannot afford to pay their taxes at the current rate, and people are losing their jobs. There are people who can't afford to buy their medicine. She promised everyone would remember who voted to help people in the community and who did not.

Matthew Gabriele , 213 Woodbine Drive, Blacksburg, a member of the Library Board, spoke in support of the 4¢ tax increase and what it would mean to the library system. During the month of February, which was closed 5 days during that period due to the weather, had close to 40,000 visitors, which is well over a third of Montgomery County's population. There was a high circulation of books, but Mr. Gabriele focused on the computer usage that the libraries provide. Nearly 9,000 people use the library's computers for job hunting, writing resumes, applying for jobs, starting businesses and educating themselves. The 4¢ tax increase will allow the libraries to continue to drive the services that they do now. Anything less would be catastrophic for the County as a whole, and for the libraries in particular.

Delmer Howard 2740 Reese Mountain Road, Elliston, spoke in opposition to a tax increase. He believes our government is in one of the worst tax conditions ever, and getting worse. The

elderly, people on fixed incomes and the poor, who if they had the money they were paying on their real estate taxes they could probably pay another payment on their home. Mr. Howard believes money for such things as the libraries is nice in good economic times, but in bad times with parents being at home because they have been laid off from their jobs, they can read a book to their children. He believes that is how you keep your children on track. As far as prisons, he said there was a survey done about why people are in prison and they asked the prisoners, what would you want your parents to do, and they said to correct them when they are wrong. Mr. Howard considered a tax increase as doing wrong and stated that he was here to correct the Board. If he had to pay 75¢ on every \$100 for his property and it was valued at \$10,000 that would be \$75; \$50,000 value is \$375, and so on. According to Mr. Howard, he was speaking on behalf of the people who could not be here tonight because they didn't have gas money, and declared his opposition to a tax increase.

Paul Curtis 290 Briarwood Drive, Christiansburg, spoke against a real estate tax increase. Mr. Curtis said he has been in business in Christiansburg and surrounding areas since 1963. He is going on 72 years old and is pleased that he still has a job, because he has friends that took retirement and now they need a job because of the situation with their 401K problems, and other things. Mr. Curtis averred that he has lived in the same house for 36 years, and the tax base is up 500% since 1974. The elderly people who own most of the real estate cannot afford a tax increase.

Kenneth Moles 295 Craig Street, Christiansburg, asked that the Board consider the citizens of Montgomery County and lower the tax rate. He went on to describe how vehicles belonging to the school board run up and down the road but has no idea where they are going because there is no school on the end of the county where he lives. He is sure they are not going in the right direction to work for the school board.

Wes Atkins 2275 Unlucky Lane, Christiansburg, spoke against the proposed 4¢ increase in the real estate tax rate and wants some of the waste cut out in the county. Mr. Atkins asked that the people in the audience who are opposed to the tax increase to please stand up. Approximately ½ of those in the audience stood. He has noticed that other counties are asking the taxpayers for suggestions on how to save taxpayers' money and recommended that Montgomery County do the same. He suggested one way to save money would be to turn all the lights off around the government center and the parking lot at night. He responded to an earlier speaker about her concern that deputies would not be able to get to her house in an emergency is the Sheriff's office has to cut staff. He told her not to worry because on a recent well-being check in his neighborhood, 3 deputies showed up in three different cars. It would also help if the county gathered up some of the county vehicles that have been seen at CVS, Wal Mart, Kroger, banks, doctors' offices, and other places. According to Mr. Atkins, some of the schools' vehicles are driven back and forth to Pulaski County. He asked that the Board take note of the poverty rate in Montgomery County, which is at 20.6%. There are a lot of people without jobs and are losing their homes. In addition to that, the county is in the process of reassessment. He believes that if the waste was cut out, a tax increase would not be necessary.

Betty Wright 50 Patricia Lane, Christiansburg, a lifelong resident of Christiansburg, spoke against the proposed tax increase because she is retired and on a fixed income. She believes the government needs to learn to live within its income instead of asking for a raise. There are times when those on a fixed income have to either pay their electric or gas bill or buy food and medicine. For those reasons, she asked the Board to consider not raising the taxes at this time, and to look for other ways for income rather than from the homeowners, so many of whom are the older, retired people that have already paid their dues.

Julia Lewis 1173 Oakland Square, Blacksburg, deems the real estate property tax to be the most unfair tax there is. If you have an identical house here and one next to it, and this house has no children and this house has 12, they pay exactly the same amount of taxes, and she finds that very unfair. She understands that the General Assembly ties the hands of local government because they will only allow localities certain ways to raise revenue. Since Montgomery County is a very fast growing county, she suggested that the Board adopt impact fees. She concluded that, as she dislikes the unfairness of the real estate tax, she is in favor of the 4¢ increase because she wants to see the school children well educated, and our public libraries to be kept open because they have a lot to offer.

Virgil (Brownie) Cauley 130 Sweet Apple Lane, Newport, a life science teacher at Blacksburg Middle School, encouraged the Board to continue to support the county's core services by setting the real estate taxes at the advertised rate. He pointed out that many of the elected officials at the state level have failed to recognize the damage inherent in the level of cuts that have been made. He urged the Board to continue their support so that any gains that have been made will not be lost.

Paul Smeal 1107 Kentwood Drive, Blacksburg, addressed the Board in support of the proposed tax rate and the advertised budget. In looking at the budget, it appears to him that only 32% of the budget comes from real estate taxes. As a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission for the past few years, Mr. Smeal knows the Parks and Recreation Department provides an excellent service to the county. Not only to the youth but to the adults and seniors. To emphasize his point, he said about 3 years ago the people in the Elliston/Shawsville area came to Parks and Recreation and said they wanted programs down in their area, and Parks and Recreation has provided several programs at the Meadowbrook Community Center. Mr. Smeal also supports the libraries. He has trouble seeing well enough to read now, and the library has been a real God send in lending books on CD's , and that takes the place of newspapers, magazines, etc. so he is in the library at least 2 or 3 times a week. He asked that the Board continue their support for the library and for parks and recreation, and wanted them to be aware that in the future more support will be needed as the Elliston Elementary School is available for their outdoor facilities.

Richard Shelton, Treasurer, Peakland Way, Christiansburg, explained that he did not ask any of his employees to attend the hearing, that they came of their own free will, and they are certainly not being paid to attend, or compensated in any way. He defined the two things that he had come to ask for 1) to restore the proposed job cuts to his office, and 2) approve the proposed 4¢ real estate tax increase. Since members of his staff were present, he asked that they stand, and commended them for the fantastic job they do collecting and receiving taxes. Mr. Shelton compared Montgomery County's tax rate to those of Roanoke County, the City of Roanoke and the City of Salem and pointed out that, compared to these localities, Montgomery County has a low real estate tax rate. He asked that none of the positions in his office be eliminated. In order to continue business as usual he needs to maintain his current staff. Each citizen expects services from the county and they need to realize that the services they expect and receive come with a cost associated with the services, and these costs will continue to rise.

Patricia Colatoski 1445 Taylor Hollow Road, Blacksburg, spoke in support of the proposed 4¢ real estate tax increase, reiterating that on the average home valuation of \$200,000 is an additional \$80 for the entire year. She compared that amount to two nights at a movie for a family of 4, maybe two nights eating out. She reminded everyone that for those who are on a fixed income, or have a low income, there are programs in place to deal with that. Without the tax increase she believes there will be a big loss in services and the people that give these services. If she calls 911 she wants to know that the 911 operator is not stressed about losing their job. If she needs the sheriff's department she doesn't want to have to wait, this is a big county in terms of area and with fewer deputies the response times are going to go up.

Charles Sink 300 Royal Lane, Blacksburg - As a citizen of Montgomery County, Mr. Sink said he doesn't like paying higher taxes any more than anyone else, but it has come to the point to where there doesn't seem to be any alternative. He expressed his appreciation for what the Board has done so far in their efforts and the fact that there was not an increase in the tax rate last year. If paying a little extra in taxes means he doesn't lose a teacher who already has 32 students in a class and her class size is going to go to 40, then I'll do that for now. Speaking as a deputy sheriff, he thanked the Board for their concern and their efforts to keep the sheriff's department staffed this year. Sheriff Whitt has kept them updated on the situation. He thanked the Board and Sheriff Whitt for all the work they have done the past year, and knows the coming year will be even more challenging.

Chris Ramsey 355 Newcomb Street, Christiansburg, understands the strong emotions and sincerity of everyone who has addressed the Board. Mr. Ramsey suggested there needs to be more thought and consideration of the services that our tax dollars provide, the expectation for the services that would be lost without this increase will not go away, the citizens will expect the same level of services they have now, and they have a right to expect those services. They have a right to expect that their tax dollars will provide a safe, secure community where their families can thrive. While acknowledging that the budget crisis has hit everyone from a personal level to

a professional level to the government, we need to continue to give the citizens the services that they expect and that they deserve. As a parent with children in school, he would pay \$6.70 a month to have his child's classroom size at 22 students instead of 40 students, and for them to have the resources such as computers, new books, teachers and teacher assistants that may be lost without this tax increase. From that perspective, he urged the Board to vote for the 4¢ tax increase.

Greg Cyrus, Hitching Post Drive, Christiansburg. Mr. Cyrus described how he finished his new home in 2005 and as of 2010 his property taxes have gone up \$650 within the 5-year period. The value of his home is less than it was three years ago, but he has not received a refund for the difference that he has paid. Mr. Cyrus said he has not asked for a refund so he feels that he is doing his part by the excessive amount of real estate taxes he has been paying. The people in the community who are not paying their fair share of taxes are the students that go to Virginia Tech and people who are renting. He realizes the money has to come from somewhere and the property owners are the ones who have to make up the difference. Mr. Cyrus offered a proposal that instead of asking the citizens to help, communities such as Blacksburg and Christiansburg be approached to see if they can help. Although he doesn't know if this is a valid proposal, he suggested that the two towns be requested to donate a portion of their food tax to the county to offset the budget shortfall, and if not donate, then raise the food tax if that is possible, and donate it to the county for a specified amount of time such as a 12-month or 24-month period. That way the property taxes wouldn't go up, everyone who is eating out would pay a little more, but it would be for a specified number of months. He urged the Board to look into his proposal.

Lisa Lucas Gardner 11 Phlegar Street, Christiansburg, stated that as a town taxpayer she feels that she is double taxed already. Listening to those who spoke before her, it seems like the two things that are cherished the most, education and public safety, are in question. While people are paying \$5 a day to smoke a pack of cigarettes, \$7 for a 6-pack of beer, \$6 for a fast food meal or \$20 for a movie, she cannot believe that people are opposing the 4¢ tax increase. That's very little to keep people employed such as public safety officers, school teachers, the employees in the Treasurer's office. She believes that if someone can't afford their property taxes they should probably go ahead and sell their property. The community needs the public safety officers. If the crime rate goes up because the economy is getting worse, you're going to need more officers out there to enforce it. Also the literacy rate, education dropout rate, crime is going to increase, so these are two things that have to be funded.

Phyllis Albritton 1003 Highland Circle, Blacksburg. Ms. Albritton has lived in this "awesome" community for 37 years, first working with the County Council of PTA's, and is now a member of the School Board. She appreciates what the Board has done historically to support law enforcement, our libraries, our recreation department, and our public schools. She agrees that \$6.70 isn't a lot on a \$200,000 house and urged the Board to adopt the 4¢ tax increase. Ms. Albritton stressed that our children are the future, and she appreciates the Board's willingness to raise taxes when funds have been cut by the state.

Darrell Hinkley, 730 Liberty Street, Christiansburg. Mr. Hinkley stated that he has lived in Christiansburg all his life, and he knows that his taxes do go up every year. The base rate may not have gone up last year, but his house is not worth, on the current market, what it has been assessed at. While he appreciates our police officers, our schools and libraries, he knows there are other ways this can be done. He knows that businesses in the area are struggling to make it and if the taxes keep going up they are not going to be able to afford to keep going. The county has lost a lot of factories in the last 10 years. That's where the money went, when the factories left, so did the taxes that all the people were paying that were working in the factories. We need to attract more businesses into the county and not keep squeezing money out of people who can't afford to pay. Mr. Hinkley repeated that he appreciates everyone here but does not agree with the proposed tax increase.

Bill Turner, 1770 Ellet Road, Christiansburg. Mr. Turner is not opposed to law enforcement, they serve by basically putting their lives on the line every day for the citizens of Montgomery County. And he is not opposed to education, he understands special education because he had a child that needed special education in school. He understands the need for money but he believes it can be gotten in many other ways. He explained that almost a year ago both he and his wife were laid off from their jobs and neither has found gainful employment since. In his opinion, the county missed a great opportunity and spent a lot of tax money on fighting the intermodal facility which could possibly bring him a job. He wonders where the Board was at

the time when the Virginia Tech “dumb road” was built in his back yard and caused him to have to dig a new well because of dynamiting and he has been told from the drought that year that cost him \$50,000. Mr. Turner knows there are people who are in worse condition than he and his family, that are on very low fixed incomes that have been struggling even in good times. He asked that the Board look for the money some other way, such as the meals tax.

Stephanie Parsons stated that she and her husband are trying to build a house in Montgomery County, and she wanted to point out the obstacles they have faced. They have tried to obtain just water and sewer hookup, and basically they’re not obtainable. She stated that every time she turned around there was another permit she had to get, and she wanted to know where the money for the permits went. Ms. Parsons suggested that the way for the county to obtain additional funding was to allow businesses and residents to build here in the county. She said the county wants to raise taxes when they won’t even give her water and sewer. Ms. Parsons said she works for the school board and supports public education. She also supports the libraries and the Sheriff’s office. She went on to say that Montgomery County should not be compared to Roanoke County and Salem, because Montgomery County does not offer the same things. She believes there are other alternatives besides increasing the real estate tax rate and offered to provide a list of alternatives. She suggested that a special meeting be called to solicit ideas from the citizens.

John Matherly, 4225 Cumberland Drive, Christiansburg. Mr. Matherly’s problem is having to pay county taxes plus town taxes, so he is opposed to any tax increase. He supports funding for the libraries because the libraries do good work. However, home sales fell to an all-time low in February and the unemployment rate nationwide is 9.7%, having a great impact on the middle class. There are a lot of people whose unemployment insurance is running out, and if they are able to find a job it is most likely for minimum wage. One option for the Board to consider is to increase the food tax rather than depending on the homeowners. Other options to consider are to make cuts in each department, perhaps some departments could go to a 4-day work week.

Paul Curtis 290 Briarwood Drive, Christiansburg. Mr. Curtis affirmed that everything discussed at this hearing is very important – the schools, the libraries, the Sheriff’s office. He opposes the tax increase because of the age group he is in. It was different when he was younger and had children in school. He is a business owner and asked that it be put in the record that there are business people that are having trouble surviving and cannot stand much more of this. He doesn’t know how the assessor came up with the value of his property while sitting in his car in his driveway without ever getting out of his vehicle.

Lois Crismond offered an apology to the Treasurer, explaining that she did not say he required his staff to attend this public hearing, she had said “she heard”. She pointed out that she is not opposed to the schools, the libraries, or the Sheriff’s office, but she is against the tax increase because people cannot afford it. She said the state was requiring employees to take 5 days without pay, which could be an option for the county to consider.

The following e-mail messages were received to be included in the record:

Received on March 26, 2010 from Jeff and Deborah Johnson: “We are in favor of the proposed tax rate increase. We know the state just shifted the cost to us, however, we need to address the needs of the county. Jeff & Deborah Johnson”

Received on March 26, 2010 from Irene and Ira Jacobs: “We cannot attend the meeting but realize that a tax increase is sorely needed if the county is to continue to provide necessary services. We are very much in favor of the increase. Irene & Ira Jacobs, 561 Hickory Hill, Blacksburg”.

There being no further speakers, the public hearing on the advertised real estate tax rate was closed. The Chair explained that citizens in the community who have limited assets and limited incomes may qualify under the county’s tax exempt program for the elderly and disabled. Farmers can qualify for a tax break by putting their land in an agricultural and forestal district. The Chair expressed her appreciation to those who attended the public hearing and assured everyone that all the statements made at this public hearing would be taken into consideration when the Board makes a decision on the FY 2010-2011 tax rate. At this point, the Chair called a 10-minute recess.

Proposed 2010-2011 Budget

To receive citizens' comments with regard to the proposed FY 2010-2011 Budget

The Chair opened the budget hearing with an invitation for citizens to comment on the proposed FY 2010-2011 budget in the amount of \$154.1 million. She explained that this public hearing would follow the same procedures as the public hearing on the tax rate. The names of those who signed up to speak would be called first, and each speaker would be allowed five (5) minutes. After all those who signed up had addressed the Board, those in the audience who have not signed up would be given the opportunity to speak on the proposed budget.

Bonnie Wegrzyr, 3410 Brookside Drive, Christiansburg. Ms. Wegrzyr spoke in support of the Sheriff's office. She recounted that back in January she had a family crisis when her daughter's life was threatened with a knife to her throat. She managed to get her and her baby away from the situation and went to the magistrate, and called her from there. This started at 5:00 in the afternoon. The sheriff's department was called because of where she lived, it was the Montgomery County Sheriff. They did not give up. It was raining, it was freezing cold, for eight hours they searched for her fiancée, did not give up, and she feels that funds cannot be cut from the law enforcement budget, because if it wasn't for their efforts that night he (the fiancée) would have come back to her daughter's apartment and her daughter would not be here today and her granddaughter would not have her mom, and they have the Montgomery County Sheriff to thank for that. She thanked the Sheriff and the Board, and said hopefully that a way can be found to save everyone's job in the Sheriff's office.

Jimmy Epperly, Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Commission, thanked the Board for establishing the Fire and Rescue Commission, that having this commission has helped fire and rescue a great deal. The commission is fine with level funding. He wanted to tell some of the folks who spoke earlier that ambulances and fire trucks are going to go. The fire and rescue volunteers do not get paid, and Mr. Epperly pointed out the Board has been good to them and they will support the Board in whatever decision they make.

Sheriff Whitt Referring to the citizens that have addressed the Board, the Sheriff agreed that everyone had a valid point concerning their likes or dislikes, their support or lack of support, on the proposed 4¢ tax increase to offset the state budget reductions. It is very sad that the state places mandates upon the locality and then fails to fund those mandates. That puts the Board members in the position of looking like the bad guy, and it puts the Sheriff in a position of looking like the bad guy for having to stand and ask the Board to support the budget that the County Administrator has proposed. It also puts the citizens in a bad situation, but if we are going to have the same services that we currently have and the state is not going to pay, then the buck stops here, with the Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff, and the County Administrator. The Sheriff reminded everyone that for the past 18 months the Board of Supervisors has helped him and has helped the men and women who work for him, otherwise the Sheriff's office would have already had layoffs. He thanked the Board, and asked that they approve the proposed 4¢ increase in the tax rate, which is necessary to provide public safety for the citizens of this county in a manner in which they demand.

Erica Williams, 285 Alder Lane, Christiansburg, took the opportunity to thank the Board members, the County Administrator and the financial staff for their support of the Clerk's office through the past 18 months when the state has made cut after cut after cut to the constitutional offices. She expressed her appreciation for the Board's willingness to make up the difference in the cuts seen by her office, as well as the Sheriff's office, the Commonwealth's Attorney's office, Treasurer's office and the Commissioner of the Revenue's office. With help from the Board of Supervisors, the Clerk's Office has continued to provide, without interruption, the same services and also comply with every statutory and legal requirement. Fortunately for the Circuit Court Clerks, the General Assembly has recently restored some of the funding that has been cut over the past eighteen months. It is likely the Clerk's office will not be cut the additional 18% as anticipated. Citizens have come to expect the many services that are provided by the Clerk's office, and Ms. Williams requested that the Board adopt the budget as proposed by the County Administrator.

Cynthia Chappelka, Secretary to the Electoral Board, spoke of the urgent need to fill the vacant assistant registrar position. According to the Code of Virginia, the population of Montgomery County calls for 5.8 assistant registrar positions. This position was originally approved by the Electoral Board and by the County in 1999 and for 10 years the staff remained at 4 full-time

positions, even though the number of voters has increased by 45%. In order to continue providing efficient elections, above reproach which the public demands, this vacant position needs to be filled. Since 2000 major changes have taken place in the election process. The introduction of the electronic voting machines and electronic poll books require exceptional information technology expertise, which is the responsibility of this position, and the registrar. Additional mandates require more documentation and record keeping. More regulations have been implemented at the state and federal level. The increase in voter interest and participation has placed more demands on the registrar's office by the general public. An increase in voters has resulted in added precincts, the centralized absentee precinct and Christiansburg recreation center and has increased the need for more officers of election. The Electoral Board, in an attempt to comply with Code Sec. 24.2-112, to meet the expectations of the public and to continue the quality of elections in Montgomery County, respectfully requested that the Board of Supervisors restore the assistant registrar position to the budget and permit the registrar to fill this position immediately.

Richard Workman, 212 Pine Drive, Blacksburg, alleged that the 4¢ tax increase is to support the Board's policy of tax, borrow, and spend. County government has continued to grow and expand, along with the school system. Although he is not against education, the school budget is so large with over 65% of their budget in salary and benefits. He does not believe the teachers are getting the majority of the salary request, he believes the school system is heavy in administration. Everyone has to realize that people are hurting and these other folks that made the statement about people on a fixed income and are retired have cut back and sacrificed to the max. With the exception of a couple of Board members, he doesn't think the Board gets it. These are desperate times that call for desperate action. Mr. Workman foresees next year as being worse than this year, depending on state revenue, and recommended to the Board that a hiring freeze be enforced, and employees that quit or retire not be replaced. The Board needs to meet with every general government department head and try to cut their budget by 5%, (excluding the Sheriff, fire and rescue), suspend any plans or requests for new buildings or expansions, and to challenge any unfunded mandate. If necessary, he would recommend the food tax be increased. He also pointed out that the old Blacksburg Middle School has been empty for eight years and selling it would be a great help in the budget situation in our schools and libraries.

Sharon Gilbert, Commissioner of the Revenue, addressed the Board about the impact to her office due to state and county revenue shortfalls. She reminded everyone that this was not just Montgomery County's plight, that the hard economic times was world-wide, and everyone will come out of it, just as they did the great depression. However, cutting funds to the Commissioner's office would be detrimental because the treasurer cannot collect his \$10 million unless the commissioner assesses the property and puts those bills over there for him to collect. It takes every staff member, and sometime volunteers to get the work done, and if her office loses any of its staff it cannot meet deadline dates mandated by the state, for getting the land book completed, the personal property done, state income. Until May 1st with people making payments on their income tax, the Commissioner's office receives 2 or 3 trays of mail each day that has to be opened, sorted, screened, 40% of them are wrong and have to be corrected and the taxpayer has to be contacted, then process and get them to the treasurer's office in 48 hours. There are no services in the commissioner's office that could be cut, other than the land use program or the tax relief program for the elderly and disabled. Any cut in staff would devastate her office and may even keep them from getting the books to the treasurer in time to get the money in and start collecting interest.

Susan Mayorga, 104 Faculty Street, Suite 200, Blacksburg. Ms. Mayorga works out of a satellite office in Blacksburg for Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia, and asked that Brain Injury Services of SWVA be included in the Board's budget. Their purpose is to make a positive measurable difference in the survivor's abilities to fulfill their service potential and to optimize their reintegration into their families and their communities. 50 to 60% of the folks served in the New River Valley are returning to work, they're volunteering, they're returning to school or they're participating in a vocational training program. Due to budget constraints they have gone from one full time case manager and a part time case manager to serve this area to one full time position. She asked the Board to consider including Brain Injury Services of SWVA in the FY 2010-2011 budget.

Delmer Howard, 2740 Reese Mountain Road, Elliston, addressed the Board again. Mr. Howard's advice on the budget was to stop the construction of the courthouse and let the people

of the county know that you are standing up for saving money to the bare bones. He does not believe the Board of Supervisors is smart enough to solve Montgomery County's problems by themselves. Some of the things the Board is trying to undertake is not their responsibility, but the responsibility of the churches, to help the homeless, the hungry, the orphans. In his opinion, everyone has dropped the ball and there is a need to save this money right now because it is going to be needed in the future because a courthouse cannot be built that will be big enough to absorb the crime that is coming if people, the poor, keep getting oppressed. He has seen in the history of other nations, what happens to people when you just keep putting the thumb of government on them and pushing them down to a point to where they rebel.

Norma Lawson, 195 Gum Drive, Christiansburg, a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, spoke in support of the Parks and Recreation Department. Ms. Lawson explained that the Parks and Recreation Department relies very strongly on volunteers. Last year there were 250 Virginia Tech volunteers that helped out with their disc golf course event, more than 200 coaches and assistant coaches, which totals 500 volunteers for one year. The Parks and Recreation Department has not had a budget increase for many years, Ms. Lawson just asked that the Board keep their budget as it is.

Roger Lewis, 1173 Oakland Square, Blacksburg, spoke in support of the budget. Mr. Lewis came up with a suggestion to help with the budget, and asked that his wife be allowed to read it into the record, as follows:

"In this budget I urge the board to include a statement that it will study a plan to make next year's budget more fair. It could do so by establishing property tax fairness awards (PTFA) in which money eventually goes to parents who do not overburden the community. In the budget before us, 62% of total spending goes to schools. Revenue to pay this bill comes from various sources. 1/3 of this needed revenue will come from the real estate property tax on residences and businesses. Mostly from residents, i.e., 82%. So we have a huge expenditure for public schools and a huge amount of taxes from homes to help pay for those vital expenditures. While the monies collected from homes seem large, the fact that residences are heavily subsidized, they don't pay their way. For every dollar they pay in taxes, they require \$1.25 in services. Schools, meaning children, are the main reason for the subsidy. If you live in a house assessed high enough, say two or three million dollars or up, and contribute only 2 or 3 children to school costs you might not be subsidized. One could argue that the more modest the house and the larger the number of children in the house, the greater will be the subsidy paid by the community at large. That is my understanding of how the current system works. I submit this suggestion for your consideration. I call it property tax fairness awards.

It would work like this: The County would add 3 cents to the property tax rate. That would raise about \$2,400,000 a year. Those monies would go into an interest earning trust fund. Businesses would pay the 3 cent property tax too, but they would be compensated by an equal reduction in other business taxes and fees. This is because businesses are not receiving the above mentioned subsidies currently going to many, if not most homeowners. Two parent families would be eligible for awards if for K-12 education they provided not more than 3 children. A single parent would be eligible if not more than 2 children were provided. The awards would be presented at the time of graduation of the last of the eligible family's children or when parents age beyond conception.

This is not a radical proposal, awards based on conduct are offered everywhere. Young children learn this in preschool. Auto insurers give good driver discounts, well run corporations and small businesses promote partly on conduct, so do military and civilian government agencies. The eligibility limits of 3 and 2 children represent the number needed for replacement of the parents or parents in this world, plus a multiplier of one to keep the human race growing slowly in the face of wars, plagues, natural disasters, and starvation. The FTPA eligibility limits in a small way would help stem this little planet's over population. It took only 40 years for population to go from 2.5 billion to 5 billion. Now population heads for 9 billion before 2050, and already billions live in extreme malnutrition and without either help or hope. Sincere non-political anti-abortionists should welcome this proposal. Teenagers who refuse to heed pleas of parents to postpone sex would be encouraged to use contraceptives if it meant some family financial reward from the FPTA trust fund. The program would offset the millions being spent by American businesses to produce and advertise products aimed at enhancing sex acts. Thank you for your consideration, Roger Lewis, 1173 Oakland Square, Blacksburg, VA 24060."

Joe Powers, Friends of the Library, spoke in support of funding for the library system. Mr. Powers said he wished to expand on some of the comments made earlier, one of which was the gentleman that talked about the computer usage in the libraries and how important they are in these hard economic times. He is frequently in the Christiansburg and Blacksburg Libraries and he is always impressed by the many young people who are there wanting to use the computers. Mr. Powers was also impressed with what the lady said about bringing her family to the library and when she said, “when they’re in the library, we are all rich”, and that really impressed him. The fact that the libraries are a great equalizer and that everybody can come and use those facilities and avail themselves of those resources is particularly important in the hard economic times when people who do not have a lot can come and use our libraries. From a financial standpoint Mr. Powers sees what a real bargain our libraries are. Although there are people like the Friends of the Library that are raising funds to help with some of the extra programs like the summer reading program for the kids, it really comes down to the Board of Supervisors to provide the basic services and to keep the doors open and the lights on, and he expressed his appreciation to the Board for doing that.

Lois Crismond, 200 Sunrise Street, Christiansburg, said she is not opposed to the library or the Sheriff’s office or the teachers and doesn’t want to see their funds cut because people need their jobs. The Treasurer informed her recently that a citizen had made a \$500 donation to his office, and she knows that the library is always receiving donations. She asked if anyone knew how much money is donated each year to the library, the Sheriff’s office, and the county, and where the money is going. She suggested that the Commissioner’s office charge a small fee for filling out state tax forms.

Richard Shelton addressed the Board again, explaining this is the first time in the six years he has been Treasurer that he has asked the Board of Supervisors to do something for his office. To lose five employees would be a disaster for not only his office but for county collections. He asked the Board once again to try to find the money somewhere.

Darrell Hinkley, 730 Liberty Street, Christiansburg, expressed his opinion about construction of the new courthouse, saying it is something the county cannot afford and that money could be used to actually meet the budget and seed it for next year. He pointed out that the old Blacksburg Middle School is setting empty while the heat and lights are still on in the building. He questioned why the court services unit located in the old library on Radford Street can’t be moved into one of the empty spaces in the courthouse. And Mr. Hinkley has observed that the old building over in Cambria where the school bus garage is located occupies only two offices. He found the rest of the building to be empty.

There being no further speakers, the public hearing was closed. The Chair announced that the Board of Supervisors will meet on Thursday, April 1, 2010 to discuss the budget and to discuss some of the information they received from the citizens at these public hearings. She reminded everyone once again that the County has programs available to reduce the tax burden for the elderly and disabled and a land use program is available for farmers who place their land in an agricultural and forestal district.

The Chair thanked everyone for taking the time to attend the public hearings and assured them that the Board will take all their comments into consideration when making a decision on the tax rate and budget for FY 2010-2011.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by William H. Brown, seconded by James D. Politis and carried unanimously, the Board adjourned to Thursday, April 1, 2010 5:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

APPROVE: _____
Annette S. Perkins
Chair

ATTEST: _____
F. Craig Meadows
County Administrator